



AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

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The Waiting . . . Not the Hardest Part

Have you ever experienced that bittersweet feeling at a U.S. international airport shortly after disembarking from an international flight? You know the one. You're happy that you've made it home but you're dreading the line to clear U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). You've probably wondered why those lines can be so long. To put it simply, CBP must ensure that all persons entering the country are doing so with the right intentions.

Most people, however, do not pose a risk to the U.S. For that reason CBP created Global Entry, a trusted traveler program that will allow you to skip past

the dreaded lines.

What is Global Entry?

Global Entry is a CBP program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers. It is open to all U.S. citizens and citizens of Korea, the Netherlands, Mexico, and Panama.

How Does It Work?

Upon arrival at participating airports, participants proceed to a Global Entry kiosk, present their passport or U.S. permanent resident card, verify their fingerprints, and make a customs declaration. The kiosk issues a transaction receipt and directs the

traveler to baggage claim and the exit.

How Does One Join?

Though intended for frequent travelers, anyone may apply for Global Entry.

To do so, you must first fill-out an online application through CBP's [Global Online Enrollment System](#) (GOES) and pay a non-refundable \$100 enrollment fee.

You must then pass a security threat assessment and attend an interview with a CBP officer.

So what are you waiting for? The next time you travel to the U.S. sign-up for Global Entry and avoid the line. Visit www.cbp.gov

ACS hours (online appointments):

- Mon, Tues, Thu
8:00 - 12:30;
1:30 - 3:00
- Wed
8:00 - 12:00
- Fri 8:00 - 10:00

FBU hours (e-mail appointments):

- Mon, Tue, Thu 7:30 - 12:30; 1:30 - 3:00
- Wed, 7:30 - 12:00
- Fri, 8:00 - 10:00

Renew Your Passport From Home

To improve its service to American citizens, the Embassy plans to launch a pilot program to allow passport renewals by mail. Under this program, adult U.S. citizens with expired or expiring passports will be able to renew their passports without making a trip to the Embassy.

To renew by mail you will need to fill out and sign a [DS-82 passport application](#), and submit it along with a passport photo, certified cashier's check drawn on a Panamanian or U.S. bank,

and any supporting documents directly to the Embassy via DHL, Federal Express, or Fletes Chavale (a Panamanian courier company). You must also include a pre-paid self-addressed courier envelope. We will use it to return your new passport, your old passport, and any other documents.

Please note that the normal clearance time for a certified cashier's check is three days if drawn on a U.S. bank and upwards of two weeks if drawn on

a Panamanian one. We anticipate the overall passport processing time to be four to eight weeks.

Renewal by mail will be available only to U.S. adult passport holders. It will not be available for minors or first-time passport applicants.

In the next few weeks we will e-mail a date for the launch of the program to all U.S. citizens registered with the Embassy. We will also make an announcement on the Embassy's website.

FBU – Federal Benefits and U

Enrollment in the International Direct Deposit Program (IDD)

The US Treasury instituted an all-electronic initiative that requires check receivers to switch to an electronic form of payment. Since the Republic of Panama is participating in the **International Direct Deposit Program (IDD)** you are eligible to enroll with a local bank. This option allows you greater flexibility in choosing the bank where you would like to receive your funds.

Who is Eligible to Enroll in the International Direct Deposit Program?

At this time, all **Office of Personnel Management, Social Security and Veterans Affairs beneficiaries** residing in Panama must enroll in the International Direct Deposit Program.

How Can I Enroll in International Direct Deposit?

Visit the FBU or send an e-mail to

Panama-FBU@state.gov and you will be provided with the IDD form to enroll in the International Direct Deposit Program. The electronic payments should begin in **30-90** days after the form has been received at the Federal Benefits Unit.

Social Security's Annual Foreign Enforcement Program (FEP) Season

The FEP is one of the integrity measures used by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify the existence and identity of beneficiaries living outside the United States. In addition to relying on beneficiaries to report events that may affect their benefits, SSA contacts beneficiaries outside the United States to verify their current status. The Foreign Enforcement Questionnaire (FEQ) is mailed in **May/June** of each year to the foreign mailing address on the beneficiary's record.

The FEQ mailing follows either of

two schedules; annual or biennial (every two years):

Annual Schedule is for:

Beneficiaries with a representative payee

Beneficiaries **age 90 and over**

Biennial Schedule (Every two years) is for:

Beneficiaries receiving their own benefits

SSNs ending in 00 – 49 are sent in **even numbered years**

SSNs ending in 50 – 99 are sent in **odd numbered years**

If you don't receive your FEQ by October of the year that you are required to complete it, please contact the **Federal Benefits Unit** to be provided with one to avoid your benefits from being suspended.

For more information about the Federal Benefits Unit, please visit our [website](#).

Be a Smart Traveler



The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service for U.S. citizens traveling abroad that helps them remain informed, connected and safe.

Stay informed – by signing up, you will receive travel updates and information about the country you are traveling to, travel warnings, and travel alerts (where appropriate).

Stay connected – in the event

of an emergency, the Embassy will have access to your emergency contact information. We can contact you and your loved ones or help you get in touch with friends or family in the U.S.

Stay safe – a well-informed traveler is a safer traveler. Our country-specific information, travel alerts, travel warnings, fact sheets, and warden

messages will provide you with invaluable information about any country that you may visit. We will provide you with information on possible risks and security threats so you can make informed decisions.

To enroll, visit the [STEP webpage](#).

To download the app visit [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#)

Ambassador's Visit To Chiriqui

Ambassador Farrar recently visited Chiriqui, Veraguas, Herrera and Los Santos where he met with U.S. citizens and inspected U.S. government funded projects and programs. During his stay in Chiriqui, the Ambassador had the opportunity to meet with U.S. citizens in Boquete and listen to

some of their questions and concerns. Ambassador Farrar also met with over 40 U.S. citizens in Chitre during his first visit to the Azuero region where he gave a radio interview and participated in a meeting to discuss the program of the Accusatory System in the region.



Residing vs. Visiting Panama



Many expatriates who live in Panama never apply for a residency visa of any kind and simply make "border runs" every 90 days to renew their entry visa in order to remain in the country.

While this practice is quite widespread, our Panamanian colleagues at the immigration authority have told U.S. Embassy

representatives in Panama that this is not the spirit of the tourist visa.

Panama immigration suggests that U.S. citizens who want to live in Panama apply for a residency visa. There are several categories of residency visas including Panama's Pensioner (Retiree) Visa, Friendly Nations

Visa, Professional Employment Visa, Panama's Reforestation Investor Visa, Panama's Self Economic Solvency Visa, Married to a Panama Citizen Visa, or Parents of Child Born in Panama Visa. For more information, please consult the [Panamanian Migration Authority's](#) website

Your U.S. Tax Return Overseas

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien residing overseas, or are in the military on duty outside the U.S., and have missed the June 2-month extension, it is NOT too late to file your U.S. tax return. You can still file an additional extension for October 15. To apply for an extension to file your return please visit the IRS website's [U.S.-Citizens-and-Resident-Aliens-Abroad](#) webpage.

All U.S. citizens, even those living abroad, are generally required

to file U.S. taxes. While there are certain exclusions for foreign income, to be entitled to them taxpayers must file a return.

According to IRS's Tax [Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad](#):

"If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien living or traveling outside the United States, you generally are required to file income tax returns, estate tax returns, and gift tax returns and pay estimated tax in the same way as those residing in the United

States. Your income, filing status, and age generally determine whether you must file a return. Generally, you must file a return if your gross income from worldwide sources is at least the amount shown for your filing status in the Filing Requirements table in Chapter 1 of [Publication 54, Tax Guide for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad](#)."

For Panama's filing requirements please visit the [Autoridad Nacional de Ingresos Publicos](#) website



Your Right to Vote from Overseas

Even though you live overseas, you can still exercise your rights as a U.S. Citizen to vote in federal and home state elections.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), as amended by the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, requires States to transmit requested absentee ballots to U.S. citizen voters residing outside the U.S. no later than 45 days before a Federal election.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) works to ensure that overseas citizens are

aware of their right to vote and have the tools needed to do so.

If you want to vote in a Federal Primary or Special Election you should visit [FVAP.gov](#) for information on registering to vote and requesting your absentee ballot according to State deadlines and requirements.

If you do not receive your requested State ballot **at least 30 days** before an election you may prepare, print and sign a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). The backup FWAB can be easily completed by using the [FWAB online as-](#)

[sistant](#), filling out

Upcoming Elections

Over the next month, 34 States will be holding primary elections. To find out if your State will be holding a primary, please visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) [Upcoming Elections Events](#) web page at

For instructions on voting from overseas, please visit the FVAP Absentee Voting Overview web page at <http://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter/overview> or the Embassy's [Voting Assistance](#) web page.



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<http://panama.usembassy.gov/index.html>